Misc Clarke, W. N.

The Work Measured

Village School, India

American Baptist Missionary Union

An Address

DELIVERED BY

Vice-President WILLIAM *N.* CLARKE, *D. D.*

at the eighty-ninth annual meeting of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Buffalo, N. Y., May 21, 1903.

THE WORK MEASURED

I AM very sorry that the president of the Missionary Union is not here to speak the word of congratulation and direct our deliberations. The place that is left vacant by his absence falls to me as first vice-president, and I cannot decline it, glad though I should be if I might. The arrangement of business for this evening allows but little time for a presidential address, but there is time enough for all that I desire to say. Let us take our places, in spirit, before our Lord, and then let me present the one thought that I wish to bring you. The hour is solemn and joyful to us because of the purpose and calling by which we are brought hither. If ever in this world we can say that we do something in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we can say it in a missionary assembly and in our missionary work; for the Father loved the world, and the Son died for it, and the Spirit is renewing it, and we, in our humble measure, are workers together with God. It is good to be here in such a calling, and we record before God our thankfulness and our consecration.

A Measure for the Work

We may sometimes wish that we had a measure for the work that has been accomplished in our missions, a convenient and helpful scale upon which we might exhibit and judge what has been done. How moves the work? Is our progress swift or slow? Does fruit hasten or delay? Is the time past short or long in proportion to the results? Look with me a moment at a scale or measure that our Father's providence has placed in our hands, available for our use just now for the first time, at this very anniversary.

Look back three quarters of a century. The sixteenth day of May, last Saturday, was the seventy-fifth anniversary of the baptism of Ko Thah Byu, the first Karen convert. The year was 1828. Judson had been fifteen years on Burman soil, had entered powerfully into the work of his life, and had suffered the horrors of the death-prison at Ava. A few Burmans had received the word. But Kincaid, Wade, Boardman and other helpers had arrived, and now, at Tavoy, Boardman baptized the first fruit of that race whose welcome to the word of life was at once so romantic and so full of divine reality. That was the first element in the earliest large work of ingathering in the history of our mis-

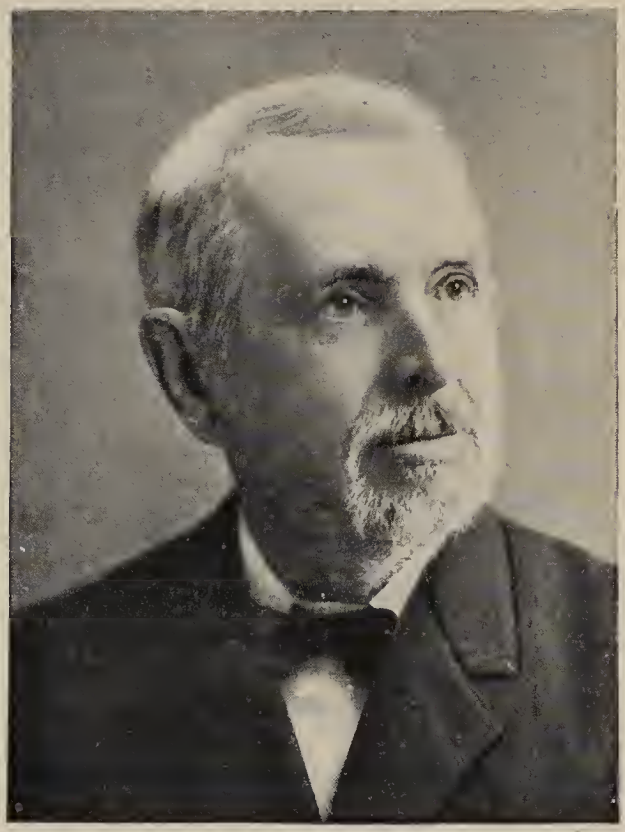
sionary enterprise. It was in the work of God among the Karens that our fathers were first aware of the rush of power, with its high inspirations, and that work began just three quarters of a century ago.

One Single Lifetime

But three quarters of a century is not the measuring-scale that I propose to apply to our work. A period of time, counted in years, is an abstract measure after all, and not very suggestive. There is a better one, more instructive and more inspiring. One single lifetime, well known to us, is the scale upon which we are just now able to exhibit and to judge the movement and greatness of our missionary work.

Our George Dana Boardman

On the eighteenth day of August, 1828, three months after the baptizing of the first Karen, there was born to George Dana Boardman, at Tavoy, a son to whom his name was given. That son's earthly life came to its end on the twenty-eighth day of April in this year 1903, or less than one month ago. That is to say, excepting only



George Dana Boardman, D.D., LL.D.

four months, the lifetime of George Dana Boardman, our George Dana Boardman, covers the period of the missionary work of the American Baptists, from the baptism of the first Karen convert until today. If we measure that work upon this more vital scale, we may perhaps obtain a more vital view and estimate of its character.

The man who lived the life is no stranger, and his name stands for no abstraction. He has lived among us, and we have known him well. He has been the president of this our Missionary Union. He was brought to America in his childhood, after his father's early death. He was graduated from Brown in 1852, and from Newton in 1855. From 1856 to 1864 he was pastor in Rochester; from 1864 to 1894, in Philadelphia. Since then he has lived quietly, never without suffering, never without work. Few men have been as tenderly loved as he. A master in preaching in his own peculiar style, a man of wide interests, courageous, gentle, devoted to the good, he has lived his life and served his generation. At least to some of us who are growing old, his lifetime does not seem so very long, the shorter, perhaps, because he so retained the spirit of youth to the end. But whether we think of it

as short or long, we have before us in review tonight a single lifetime, familiarly known to us, that stretches over seventy-five of the ninety years that have elapsed since Judson landed at Rangoon.

The Measure Applied

A single lifetime seventy-five years long. Glance at the salient events in our missionary history as they stand related to this comprehensive period, and see how they appear in the perspective that is afforded by the proportions of this one man's life. There is a fine group of them just at the beginning. When he was born, there existed a handful of Burmese converts, fruit of the fifteen years of previous labor. When he was three years old, his father, about to die, sat on the bank of the mountain stream and saw Francis Mason baptize the first considerable group of Karen converts, singing in spirit, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." When he was four years old, our fathers in America were taking the steps that led them into missionary work in France and in Greece. He was five years old when our first missionary visited the Chinese in Siam. He was six years

old when Barnas Sears baptized Oncken at Hamburg, and thus opened the Baptist work in Germany, which has since extended widely through northeastern Europe. He was eight years old when our first missionary set foot on the soil of China; and he was eight years old when the ever-memorable beginnings were made in Assam and among the Telugus of South India. Only see with how great a group of outward and forward movements our friend's boyhood synchronized. There is *something extremely fine about this group of fresh beginnings* undertaken by our fathers, a feeble folk, within so short a space of time. They were works of faith which have come to be works of power, but they all fall, with all that has come of them, within this one man's lifetime. Later events show no less strikingly when set over against the course of his career. He was in college when Dr. Ashmore's long period of service began. His removal to Philadelphia bears the same date with Dr. Clough's appointment to the Telugu Mission. His Philadelphia pastorate had run eight years of its course when our work in Japan was undertaken, and that thirty years' pastorate was nearly half spent when we heard of the marvellous ingathering among the Telugus after the

famine. He had been twenty years in Philadelphia when we adopted the mission on the Congo, the child of our English brethren, and he was looking for the end of life when we entered the Philippines with the gospel. He preached before the Missionary Union in 1869, a little after the middle of his years, when its income was below $200,000, and again in 1892, when the income had passed half a million. In the year of his birth the receipts were $14,000, in the year of his death, $722,000. Before he died our Union had more than 111,000 living members in its churches founded in heathen lands, and its work in Europe had grown to a total of more than 117,000 members.

How Incredibly Recent It All Seems

When we view it thus in relation to a single lifetime! In 1864 I, a beginner in the ministry, in my first attendance at the anniversaries, spoke with Dr. Boardman at the door of his church in Philadelphia, little thinking how short the time between would seem in 1903. Can it be that Dr. Clough went first in that same year to the Telugu country? Can I believe that we had no mission in Japan until eight years after that? Can I believe that so great a part of our historic work

lies within the field of my own memory? Did the life of this beloved friend of mine, with whom I was talking familiarly but a little while ago, actually stretch back almost to the moment of the baptizing of the first Karen? And yet we have among us a life still more inclusive. When our venerable brother, William Howe, of Cambridge, Mass., appears among his brethren, as he still does now and then, they look into the face of a man whose lifetime covers, and by several years more than covers, the entire period of the missions of American Baptists, and indeed of all American Christians. What hath God wrought! How recent, how swift, how rapidly broadening, has been His work!

See How Great Things We Inherit!

Yes, we inherit. We inherit missions in Burma, Assam, South India, China, Japan, Africa and the Philippine Islands and a paternal interest in large work in Europe; and all, one mission alone excepted, have grown to their present greatness within the lifetime of this our friend who but yesterday was here among us. And it is no inheritance of slight, tentative and precarious missions that we receive. Growth to such extent in so short a time is evidence

enough of present vitality and strength. When we remember how recent is the work and how truly it is a matter of present act, we are not surprised to hear that our inheritance is still increasing with every day. It is a springing and germinant reality still growing great, from inward life and divine encouragement, so rapidly that never and nowhere does it offer us a moment of rest in our devotion to the care of it. It is a powerful and ever-moving work of God that we inherit. Our missions were born but yesterday and have in them the vigor of youth. We are intrusted by God with the care of a living, growing enterprise, only one long lifetime old, growing on into a boundless future. Another lifetime like that of our friend who has just fallen asleep would reach on to 1978. We are unable to imagine the events and conditions of that day which seems so far but is so near, but we can see that our work as it now stands contains the promise of far greater movement and success in the three quarters of a century to come than it has had in the period that we are now reviewing. This is not wild guessing, it is forecasting of a movement that we now see actually going on.

Then we must be wise in our management.

Careless administration of such a trust is crime. If we are not working in the wisest ways that are open to us, we must learn the ways that are wiser. We must learn to keep methods that are at present good, and to abandon methods that can be improved upon. We must strain every nerve lest the work get away from us. We must not too greatly fail to do it justice. This tremendous call to strong and wise administration is a part of the inheritance that has thus swiftly come to us, and it is a call that cannot be obeyed without deep spiritual living and spiritual power. If our people will live up to their foreign missions, they will live unto God. Thus with our missions we inherit a vast and urgent need, but at the same time it would seem that we ought to see how with our missions we inherit the indispensable possession. We can do nothing without living faith in God, and so we inherit the need of faith; but how, with our missions, can we fail also to inherit faith itself?

What More do We Ask to Encourage Faith?

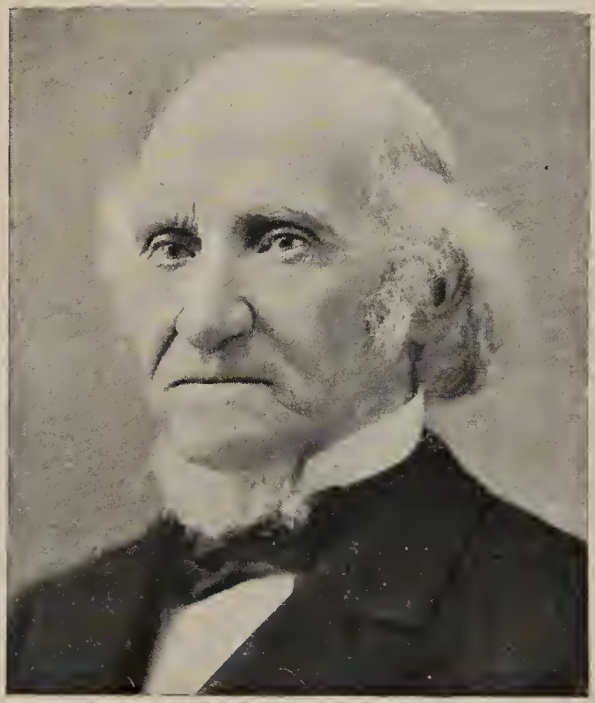
With this inheritance of ours, confidence in the living God would seem to be included and come in of itself. As God was with the fathers, so will

he be with the children, and it would seem impossible for us to doubt it. Paul thanked God and took courage. He that does one can do the other; and while we, looking back over the almost incredible greatness of the work that a single lifetime covers, thank God for what he hath wrought in the name of Jesus, we take courage for the long future, and offer him our best endeavors, to be used for his purpose and be made successful through his grace.

A Supplementary Note by Dr. Clarke

In delivering the presidential address before the American Baptist Missionary Union, which you published last week, I threw in an *ex tempore* sentence, conceived after the address was written, which I failed to offer in time for insertion in your report. I was speaking of the astonishing fact that the whole of our missionary work since the baptism of the first Karen convert was covered by the lifetime of Dr. George Dana Boardman; and it occurred to me to add a statement of fact somewhat as follows:

"When our venerable brother, William Howe, of Cambridge, Mass., appears among his brethren, as he still does now and then, they look into the face of a man whose lifetime covers, and by



WILLIAM HOWE, D.D.

several years more than covers, the entire period of the missionary work of American Baptists, and of all American Christians." This remarkable fact came to me afresh today, when I read of the ninety-seventh birthday of Dr. Howe. He was born four years before the organization of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and while Adoniram Judson was still in Brown University. The amazing recency and rapidity of the modern work of foreign missions is thus exhibited with wonderful power.—To *The Watchman.*

2 Ed.-10 M.-12-03.